

Overview

Qualified Bilingual Staff (QBS) represent a critical link to providing effective communication and quality care to the limited-English proficient (LEP) communities and individuals we serve. DBHDS has a Departmental Instruction 209, *Ensuring Access to Language and Communication Supports* that provides guidance to facilities for providing effective language services to individuals receiving services and to individuals' authorized representatives who then make informed decisions. The DI states that "bilingual employees can only provide foreign language or sign language interpretation if they have documented proficiency in English and the target language, have completed a qualified bilingual staff program, and have the necessary certificate on file. QBS are **NOT** replacements for interpreters or translators, which require different training and certification. All of these are considered separate components of your language services toolbox to be used at different times based on the level of communication needed during a particular encounter with a patient.

QBS is a program that allows for in the moment interpretation from someone who has been certified competent in their ability to assist in communication with someone who has LEP when an interpreter/translator isn't available or while arrangements are being made for an interpreter/translator. The QBS model can be a key strategic initiative with the goal of ensuring meaningful language access at THE ORGANIZATION. The model leverages and invests in internal expertise. Having a QBS program will also provide a structured plan for interpretive services recognized by the JC.

As an organization, there are several resources that are available to facilitate communication with non- or limited-English proficient members. The following illustrates the various resources and their relative impact on members' quality of care if used as health care interpreters:



The National Qualified Bilingual Staff Model, effective communication is viewed as a non-linear process. Providers and staff can be effective in utilizing their linguistic skills if encounters are matched appropriately with the level of skills. For example, a Level 1 individual would be considered qualified if functioning within the defined scope of practice in a non-clinical setting.

* National Diversity, National Linguistic & Cultural Programs 2000.

Core Training Elements

The QBS Model & Program were designed by Kaiser Permanente National Diversity & Inclusion and adapted by DBHDS to capitalize on an organization's existing workforce diversity and ensure qualified linguistic services and culturally competent care at every point of contact. DBHDS adaptation is specifically designed to build terminology in behavioral health, substance abuse, and developmental services setting and discuss the unique role that bilingual staff may have interpreting in these settings. This model has been recognized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the California Endowment, and award winner from the National Committee for Quality Assurance and the Migration Policy Institute. It has been successfully implemented in healthcare settings in Georgia, California, and the Mid-Atlantic States. Two hundred bilingual providers and staff have been trained since the program was implemented at DBHDS in 2011.

Course Content

Levels 1 and 2 are classroom portions offered by the Office of Cultural and Linguistic Competency (OCLC) period for a total of 24 hours of didactic instruction and all candidates must attend. This program is focused on introducing theory and practice. The content of these two levels include:

- legal and regulatory requirements on language access
- diversity and cultural competence
- effective communication strategies
- modes of interpreting
- basic concepts of interpreting
- roles and responsibilities as a "dual role" staff
- standards of practice
- ethical issues and code of ethics and
- common concepts and terminology used in our practice setting
- review of the target language assessment

Proficiency Testing

Every bilingual staff member in this program must also be assessed for competence in the target language called the QBS Assessment. This language assessment was developed and is administered by ALTA Language Services. This telephonic assessment determines the level of both English and target language proficiency. Specifically the QBS Assessment is designed to assess a staff members' ability to directly communicate with target-language speaking individuals in practice settings. The assessment is available in 19 languages. Test results allow

facilities to categorize bilingual staff's interpreter capacities and scope of practice based on the following criteria:

QBS Level 1 Bilingual Staff – Language Liaison (L1)

- Ability to converse in English and in the language of service (LOS)
- Ability to provide directions and simple instructions in English and LOS
- Ability to provide customer services types of interpreting where knowledge of medical terminology/concepts is not required.

Core Competencies

The QBS L1 is able to use LOS to directly communicate or interpret in the following situations:

- Handling appointments
- Taking complaints and/or grievances
- Providing location-based directions
- Providing non-medical instructions, such as, basic business forms
- Performing sight translation within the customer service parameters from English into the target language

QBS Level 2 Bilingual Staff – Language Facilitator (L2)

- Meets level one's (L1) requirements
- Ability to use English and LOS within the scope of practice in a clinical setting
- Ability to provide simple interpreting in various healthcare settings

Core Competencies

The QBS L2 is able to use LOS to directly communicate or interpret in the following situations:

- Providing simple medically and/or non-medically related instructions within scope of practice
- Providing health care interpreting in simple/routine clinical encounters
- Performing simple sight translation from English into the target language

It should be stated that about 30 percent of those who believe they are proficient did not pass the QBS Assessment. This fact demonstrates and reinforces the need for a facility to have a formal process in place to utilize only staff that have completed the classroom portion of the training and be assessed in order to conduct any type of interpretation/translation for the organization.

A staff member is allowed two chances at passing the proficiency test and may take the test either before the classroom course or immediately following the course. There are advantages

and disadvantages to getting assessed prior or after the classroom course and is typically been left up to the staff member to decide when they wish to be assessed, although this could be determined by the organization.

Responsibility for the QBS Program

The OCLC provides technical support, implementation consultation, interpreter proficiency testing, and QBS training supported by Kaiser Permanente and other nationally recognized healthcare organizations. The OCLC can provide such training through classroom, virtual, or written training material.

A coordinator and/or team should be responsible for ensuring accountability, regularly scheduled supervision, and continued development of the Qualified Bilingual (QB) staff and overall program. Ideally, this program should consist of one person from management, one person from Training, and one person from HR, however; it is up to each organization to create a team that will best support the QBS Program. The organization will be responsible for enforcing the use of only QBS for interpretation and training staff to recognize the value of such protocol as well as effective strategies for communicating through QBS.

Cost of Program

If the organization will be implementing or operating the QBS program organization-wide as a part of their language access plan, the 24 hour training can be conducted on-site at no charge. Currently, the proficiency test fee of \$100 is being provided by OCLC at no charge. This will change if resources are not in place to offer the test for free.

If the organization is not implementing or operating a QBS program and wants to send individual staff to a training offered in another location, the cost of the training is \$75 per person.

Determining Languages to Be Covered

In order to make this program cost effective, it is recommended that the top five languages for which we require formal interpretive services be recruited for our initial project. It is understood that the top five languages can change over time so it will be the responsibility of the organization's QBS program to monitor changes to recruit for the appropriate languages. This means that staff who request to be trained and certified in a language that is not in the top five would not be approved unless there is strong rationale for doing so. Examples of making an exception would be that there is evidence that a particular language will be needed in the near

future due to large numbers of citizens entering the community who speak that language or evidence of a shift to a language that is not in the current top five.

Procedure for QBS Recruitment and Training

1. The organization's QBS program would send a communication out to all staff to recruit personnel who speak one of the five top languages and who have an interest in becoming a QBS.
2. A formal application will be used in the process and it will include the five languages we are seeking to have staff be qualified in. Initially, only applications from staff who wish to be certified in these languages will be considered.
3. Additional requirements on the application will include a good attendance history, no active written notices, performance rating of contributor or higher on last evaluation, completion of the probationary period or within two months of completion, and permission of the supervisor.
4. The QBS Program will review all applications for appropriateness into the program.
5. Arrangements will be made for the OCLC to come to the organization to conduct the training. If it's not possible for the OCLC to come to the organization and training is being offered elsewhere in the COV, sending staff will be considered contingent upon available funding.
6. If the staff member wishes to wait until completion of the classroom class, they will have 45 calendar days after completion of the classroom course in which to take the language assessment.
7. The organization would create an account with ALTA. Once they contact ALTA, the employee will set up a time and a date to take the test and will call in to take the test on the phone. The assessment is conducted utilizing a telephone and computer. The staff member will need a quiet place to do the assessment which is a speaking and listening test that is validated through a private vendor.
8. Upon completion of the assessment, ALTA will send a final assessment report to the designated recipient. The recipient will share with the OCLC and the OCLC will generate a Certificate of Completion to the staff member who will provide a copy to the Training Department for entry into their training transcript and a copy to the QBS Program for the organization's records maintenance.
9. Once the Certificate is received, the staff member may participate in QBS activities.
10. The QBS Program will maintain a list of QB staff and the languages they speak.

Continuing Quality Assurance

The QBS coordinator and/or team should develop a mechanism to determine how QBS are utilized in the organization. This is especially important for QBS who are tested to be a QBS level one and have limited proficiency skills. Agency staff should be trained in the difference between the two levels and how to utilize the QBS. OCLC can support this effort through live and webinar training as well as fact sheets and other information dissemination tools. QBS coordinators and/or teams should develop a process to monitor and audit the communication effectiveness of QBS on a routine basis.

OCLC will also develop opportunities for QBS to participate in continuing education training in which they can further develop terminology and skill sets related to being QBS.

More information

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<http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/professionals-and-service-providers/oclc>